



Sustainable Transportation Plan Advisory Committee

Date: Wednesday, June 3, 2020

Time: 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation

In attendance: Ezekiel Wheeler, Heather Barber, Darcy Devney, Alyson Fletcher, Jenny Raitt, Daniel Amstutz, Doug Mayo-Wells, Len Diggins, Kristine Shah, Rachael Stark, Matt Smith, Phil Goff, Ali Carter.

Minutes

1. Welcome and Introduction to Remote Meeting, including Ground Rules.

Daniel Amstutz read a set of prepared remarks explaining the procedures that the Committee would follow to hold a virtual meeting. Governor Baker signed an Executive Order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic allowing virtual meetings, which suspended the usual Open Meeting Law requirement that a quorum of committee members be physically present in order to hold an official committee meeting. Amstutz confirmed the committee members in attendance for the meeting.

2. Public Comments.

There were none.

3. Approval of Minutes from April 6, 2020.

Minutes were approved.

4. Project Status Update.

There have been 775 responses received on the transportation survey so far. Staff are looking at where we may have gaps in reaching certain demographics. Over 180 points have been put on the transportation map, mostly along Mass Ave and in East Arlington, and as not much in the Heights north of Summer St. Linda Butt of Arlington Catholic is moving to a different role within the organization and can no longer participate on the committee. Amstutz has asked her to identify someone else at AC who could participate on the committee.

5. Existing Conditions Overview/Transportation Factbook.

Matt Smith presented information developed as part of drafting the Transportation Fact Book. He noted that the Fact Book is structured so that someone can easily get information from it. The first part of the document goes over some basic information about the transportation system in town, such as miles of streets, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and public transportation routes. The next parts go over demographic information and land use patterns.

Smith presented a variety of information about the street network, including the public versus private ways, approximate traffic volumes, locations of signalized intersections, and crash data. He commented that it was unusual to find so many crashes in the neighborhood areas, and their sub-consultant BETA group will be looking into details about these crashes to understand them better. Bicycle and pedestrian crashes are most common on Mass Ave. Phil Goff recommended going back further than five years when it comes to fatalities, to understand if there are any patterns with this. It was also mentioned that enforcement of traffic laws is important for improving safety.

Smith discussed employment patterns of people who live and work in Arlington and the commute mode share. Arlington residents bike and take public transit to work at higher rates than regional peers.

Smith presented information about the biking, walking, and transit networks. LimeBike data analyzed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council showed people bicycling in all parts of town. The pedestrian network has areas that are missing sidewalks and the committee discussed concerns about sidewalk conditions and snow removal. Transit access is also influenced by the topography. Steep slopes may create serious challenges for people to be able to walk to bus stop or to local services.

He noted that the concept of sustainability has been weaved through the Fact Book and is not placed into a single chapter. Len Diggins said that sustainability should include data management and public health as well. Rachael Stark noted that the bicycle and pedestrian counts on the Minuteman Bikeway should be included in the mapping and statistics.

Smith asked that committee members send comments on the Fact Book to Amstutz, who will consolidate them and send them to Nelson\Nygaard for review and incorporation into the Fact Book.

Smith also noted that the logo and branding for the plan has been finalized.

6. Engagement Strategy Revisions.

Smith explained that in-person meetings are not possible due to public health concerns with COVID-19. He presented several ideas for virtual or passive formats to do public engagement. He explained the process for doing an online public forum as an example. Another idea was to put up information outside grocery stores and other places where people would be waiting (due to limitations on the number of people inside stores). They had originally planned to do a mobile workshop at the Farmer's Market and noted they could adapt this if regulations allowed it. Smith and Fletcher have been brainstorming other ideas for engaging the public. These include more passive methods like putting up flyers around town and using sidewalk chalk to spread messages.

Kristine Shah noted that the Council on Aging could help spread the word at the Arlington Housing Authority and elderly people in town with door hangers and their volunteers. These groups of people are likely to be at home longer even as the town and state begin to reopen.

Darcy Devny noted her concern about reaching people who do not have access to computers. Places where people used to use computers like the library are still closed. Shah noted the COA has been trying to address this and suggested having a hotline where people could leave a message with comments or where someone could fill out a survey for them. Stark noted that free conference calling services are also available and people don't need a computer to access them. Smith noted they will have to follow local and state best practice guidelines on public health when exploring these options. The committee discussed other engagement strategies, including putting inserts in local tax bills and putting up materials at the Arlington Farmer's Market, and putting materials in multiple languages.

Fletcher gave an additional update on the transportation survey. There has been a good representation geographically, between residents who have lived in the town for short and long periods, and across ages. However, most representation has been from people with higher incomes, and participation of the above-80 years of age group has been low. Ezekiel Wheeler noted the need to get feedback from people who travel through or work in Arlington but don't necessarily live here. Shah noted they could also distribute information through Arlington Eats, which distributes groceries and meals to low-income residents. Amstutz said they would need to make a shorter survey with a few questions for doing a hotline so it is easy to respond to. Many of these ideas are good but it may be challenging to get approvals and have staff capacity to do them. The committee also discussed social media to promote the survey.

7. Closing and Next Steps.

Amstutz noted he will send a follow up about collecting Fact Book comments.